

# A Shifting View Point

By ROBERT T. SHANNON

**A** LONG, blond hair glistened on the black coat collar of Mr. Henry Trueberry as he sat down to his evening meal. It started somewhere near the back of his neck, wrapped itself tightly around the curve of his lapel and ended in a crazy tangle just above the breast pocket of his coat. It was a conspicuous hair, robust and yellow; possibly brazen. Anyone with half an eye could have seen that it had once been a unit in an effulgent mass.

Mrs. Trueberry leaned forward to pour her husband's tea and paused with the teapot held motionless. Recovering herself she poured his cup, slid the sugar bowl over near him and placed the teapot precisely in the center of the little grass mat.

Then she picked off the hair and held it dangling in front of Mr. Trueberry's face.

"Henry," she said, "will you tell me where on earth you got this?"

"Got what, Mary?" asked Mr. Trueberry, whose eyesight was not so good as it had been in his younger days.

Mrs. Trueberry held it closer for his inspection.

"This blond hair—it was on your collar!"

"Why, I can't imagine, Mary," answered Mr. Trueberry, mildly, and truthfully.

"Neither can I," said his wife. "What if somebody else had seen it—Why, there might have been talk. Suppose our minister had seen it! Can't you think where you got it?"

Mr. Trueberry reflected and presently an embarrassing possibility developed in his mind. A faint tinge of color crept downward from his temples.

"Come to think of it," he said slowly. "I did get shaved in Miss Brundidge's shop today. She has light hair, if I recollect."

Mrs. Trueberry gasped, a little. "You went to that—that lady barber's? Henry!"

"Why yes," said Mr. Trueberry with a careful air of unconcern, clearing his throat. "I've been there several times. She has a very light touch with a razor and my face is fearfully tender."

She gazed at him in amazement. "But you're a deacon—and past forty. What will people say?"

"Nothing if they mind their own business. Lots of folks go there."

"How long has this been going on?" Mrs. Trueberry demanded sharply.

"There's nothing been going on, Mary. I've been going there because my face is tender and because Miss Brundidge is the best barber in town—bar none. She's a splendid young woman and there's no harm in patronizing her."

His spouse sniffed.

"A grass widow! Oh, I heard about her and her first husband. And you almost old enough to be her father!"

Mr. Trueberry pushed his plate toward the center of the table and prepared to defend himself.

"Mary, I believe you're jealous," he

said solemnly. "We've been married nearly twenty years and now you're mistrusting me. You must battle against the sin that's in your heart Mary and not give way to such a terrible passion. It isn't becoming a church member and a righteous wife. Miss Brundidge is a nice little woman with a sunny disposition, a bit too cheerful sometimes maybe but there's no harm in a little fun,

scold but she adopted an aloof manner that was more cutting than any tirade could have been, much more. Mr. Trueberry's efforts at pleasantry and tenderness met no response at home. Something in the wounded air of his wife kept him uneasy by day and sleepless by night.

Then, when he returned home one



"Henry," she said, "Will you tell me where on earth you got this?"

is there? Besides, her first husband drank frightfully and I don't blame her for leaving."

Mrs. Trueberry was on the verge of tears.

"I am jealous Henry," she confessed. "Any woman would be with her husband being cheerful with a lady barber and talking about her grass husband who drank. She knows you don't drink. She wouldn't take care of you when you have your rheumatism like I do. Maybe my hair's not yellow and maybe I'm not cheerful—I've been your wife nearly twenty years. How'd she look at the end of that time?"

Mr. Trueberry eyed his wife and noted her trembling chin. She was a comely little woman. Time had been tender with her whereas Mr. Trueberry had reached the stage called portly.

"If it wasn't for giving way to your wicked suspicions I'd never go there again—just to please you," he said. "But since things are as they are I'll have to keep on going until you put aside your jealousy."

The following week he made three visits to the shop of the vivacious Miss Brundidge. Mrs. Trueberry was not a

evening he was delighted to see a pleasing change. Mrs. Trueberry hummed a little melody as she moved about the kitchen and she smiled in her old, happy fashion.

"I'm feeling much better now, Henry," she said brightly as they sat down at the table. "I worried myself into a nervous headache last week. The new doctor cured the headaches quickly enough though."

"What new doctor?" asked Mr. Trueberry.

"Doctor Arnold, the one that just came to town to practice osteopathy. It's all done by rubbing. I've had my head rubbed three times already and the doctor's fingers simply drove away all pain. Oh Henry, it is such a wonderful touch!"

Mr. Trueberry flashed her a look.

"Where was this?"

"Down at the office, of course. I've been going there afternoons."

"How old is this doctor?"

"Twenty-five."

"Why didn't you have Doctor Campbell fix you up some powders? He's been our doctor for years."

Mrs. Trueberry smiled.

"Oh, this new doctor is so charming

that I thought I'd go there. Besides—the touch really is wonderful."

An emotion that had been dormant nearly twenty years stirred in Mr. Trueberry's breast.

"I don't think you'd better go again, Mary," he said. "It doesn't seem just right for a young doctor to be rubbing a married woman's head and soothing her pains. I'll have Doctor Campbell fix you up some medicine."

Mrs. Trueberry shook her head.

"We've taken such a liking to each other," she said, "that I've decided I'll have no doctor except Doctor Arnold."

"No!" Mr. Trueberry spoke with marked emphasis.

His wife looked at him in surprise.

"You're not jealous, are you Henry?" she asked plaintively.

"No—but you keep away from that doctor!"

She leaned forward.

"I'll tell you," she proposed. "You keep away from the lady barber and I won't go to Doctor Arnold's. If I was jealous you're jealous too. Shall we make it a bargain?"

Mr. Trueberry took the easiest course.

"Of course, I'm not jealous," he said with a show of indifference. "However, I'll humor you—I'll promise."

Mrs. Trueberry left the table and brought back a sheet of paper and a pencil.

"Let's make it a legal agreement," she said with a smile. "Just for fun."

"It's not necessary," he said awkwardly.

"Of course it isn't," she replied, "but you'll do it for me, won't you?"

She wrote the first pledge—"I Will Not Call On Dr. Arnold Without My Husband's Permission," and signed her name in quaint letters.

Mr. Trueberry looked at her shrewdly. He felt the affair was not yet a closed incident. Silently he took the pencil and wrote: "I Will Not Get Shaved At Miss Brundidge's Without My Wife's Permission," endorsing it with a cautious hand.

"And you weren't jealous, were you Henry?" Mrs. Trueberry asked, as she gave him a little hug and ran her fingers through his gray hair.

"Certainly not," he replied. "Jealousy is a sin before high Heaven."

She gave him a kiss on the forehead.

"I knew you weren't" she said, gaily. "But poor Doctor Arnold will be so disappointed. I was to have my back rubbed tonight."

Mr. Trueberry rose to his feet.

"Your back rubbed!"

"Why yes, I had it rubbed this afternoon and Doctor Arnold's coming over tonight to rub it again. It's the stiffness in my shoulders."

Mr. Trueberry colored.

"I wish—I wish you wouldn't have that done any more," he said with an effort. "Someone might talk."

Mrs. Trueberry looked at him sharply.

"You're angry," she said. "I can see (Continued on page six)"